DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 081 029 CS 500 378

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TITLE The Influence of Their Notions of Humanism on the Drama of Jean-Paul Sartre and Bertolt Brecht.
PUB DATE Apr 73
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Speech Assn. (Minneapolis, April, 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Creative Writing; *Drama; Dramatics; *Playwriting; Scripts; *Theater Arts; Writing
IDENTIFIERS Brecht (Bertolt); Sartre (Jean Paul)

ABSTRACT

The distinctive philosophies of Bertolt Brecht and Jean-Paul Sartre concerning man's existence directly influence their attitudes toward character, action, and the total drama. Both playwrights reveal that drama is an inseparable and reciprocal molding of content and form. The relationship between their ideas and their expressions of them is so definite that a thorough understanding of their theses is a necessary prerequisite to a genuine appreciation of their creative impulse and their plays. A committed playwright's ideas so permeate his creativity and purpose that the ideas and the creation become one. (EE)

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THE INFLUENCE OF THEIR NOTIONS OF HUMANISM ON THE DRAMA OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE AND BERTOLT BRECHT

Judith Zivanovic

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> What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! (Hamlet, II. ii 315-320.)

Hamlet in his melancholy may have excluded himself from human joy and potentiality, but his famous words well represent a humanist peroration. They reveal in the clear beauty of Shakespeare the philosophy's man-centered focus which emphasizes the rational nature of man and his "infinite" potentialities.

The twentieth century humanist, rejecting the conception of God as anything more than myth, focuses on the nature of man as this world's sole significant force. He likewise emphasizes the necessity for reason-directed social programs wherein men unite in order to perfect themselves individually and mankind as a whole. John Galsworthy once said, "Humanism is the creed of those who believe that in the circle of enwrapping mystery men's fates are in their own hands--a faith that for modern man is becoming the only possible faith."[1] Psychologist and philosopher, Erich Fromm, continues, "I believe in the

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perfectibility of man, but I doubt whether he will achieve this goal, unless he awakens soon."[2] Numerous playwrights of today's theatre concur that "men's fates are in their own hands" and accept the challenge of attempting man's awakening to this possibility. It is such men, and others of similar intent if opposing viewpoints, who afford theatre audiences the world over that provocative species of theatre, the drama of ideas.

Bertolt Brecht and Jean-Paul Sartre share the humanistic faith in mankind and have accepted the challenge to make their fellows aware of their possibilities and their responsibility for the world. There is, however a degree of difference in each man's approach to humanism, and the material which each presents and the manner in which he presents it is strongly tied to his respective philosophy, to what could be termed his own peculiar brand of humanism.

The question which this paper poses, therefore, is: To what extent does the philosophy of such a committed playwright affect his creative impulse and the form and style of his drama. To pursue the answer to this question, the paper will briefly examine the major components of their particular humanistic philosophy and proceed to analyze their artistic rationale and their drama by utilizing the tenets of this philosophy as the analytical base. Each man has termed his work the "true realism" yet the form and content of their drama differs considerably. The following examination will strive to determine the extent to which the differences in philosophy account for the differences in the drama.

The Philosophy

"My deed was good because I have done it . . . Every man must invent his way."[3] This statement from The Flies by Sartre indicates the essential nature of action and choice within Sartre's philosophy. According to Sartre, man is distinguished from other beings by the freedom which he alone possesses. All that is less than human is given, but man is making himself when he freely chooses. Through the free determination of the man he will become and the values he will hold, man is creating his own essence. Sartre states, "Man is condemned to be free."[4] Man must make decisions, and the sole manner of defining the value of his decision is through action. "There is no reality except action. Man is nothing else than the assembly of his acts."[5]

This reality of action manifests itself in relationships. When man discovers himself in cogito, he likewise discovers the Other. Although the Other limits his possibility, he realizes that, "The Other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge of myself."[6] Sartre emphasizes that there is a universality in man that is constantly being built and that he must want only freedom for himself and the Other. But, with this freedom comes responsibility; when one freely decides to live with men, he freely accepts the faults of his fellowmen. He is therefore responsible for the world around him and responsible to continue choosing and acting in relationship with the Other.

The extent of man's responsibility is terrible, horrifying, and magnificent. Man, each man, is alone in his choices and the responsibility for his choices. No one else can make his choices for him; and, since there is no God, he has no universal values to guide him. As Alfred Stern states:

> Without values of universal validity, guaranteed by the authority of a supra-human being, there is no universally binding ethics. Each man has to act without a universal ethics to back him up; he has to act on his own responsibility, without excuse or justification, in complete solitude and dreadful freedom.7

Moreover, the consequence of man's freedom and the fact that God does not exist is that man is the author of himself and of the world. Unless he elects suicide; therefore, he is the "incontestable author" of whatever occurs within the world and it is his.[8] As Sartre states when referring to war:

> Thus, totally free, indistinguishable from the period for which I have chosen to be the meaning, as profoundly responsible for the war as if I had myself declared it, unable to live without integrating it in my situation, engaging myself in it wholly and stamping it with my seal, I must be without remorse or regrets as I am without excuse; for from the instant of my emergence in being, I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without anything or anyone being able to lighten it.9

Brecht would agree wholeheartedly with Sartre's assertion that there are no "accidents" in this world. For Brecht, too, there is no God, so man is responsible for that which occurs in the world. However, man is responsible for Brecht, not because he was abandoned to this world and by not electing suicide accepts responsibility for it, but because he either created or permitted that tragedy of human origin which envelopes him. A German thus was either a Nazi or knowingly permitted the Nazi's to come to power.

Brecht would never use the term "my" or "mine" when referring to such situations. The situation of this nature is very much a product of the universal "we;" "we" got "us" into this and only we can get us out. Brecht makes this clear in a number of his works, however, the most vivid expression is the following from The Days of the Commune:

JEAN: We know nothing.
GENEVIEVE: Right now, Jean, we are learning.
JEAN: What good is it to us, to you and me, to know since we are going to die?
GENEVIEVE: I wasn't talking about you and me; I said us. "We" is much more than "you and I."
JEAN: I only hope that there will be enough of us with us.
GENEVIEVE: The right belongs to everybody.

We can be destructive as individuals and ultimately wreak havoc on that universal "we," or we can, as Brecht hoped, learn, band together, and create a better world for humanity.

Brecht would accept no excuse, but undoubtedly he would gladly accept "remorse or regrets" as a sign of the first step in the learning process leading to determination and action, concerted action.

Brecht saw this concerted action as possible, espoused this "humanistic hope,"[10] for, despite many indications to the contrary, Man's nature was to seek out others, and appeals to his reason should demonstrate the positive values of acting for the good of humanity.

Sartre rejects any notion of natural human inclinations or of specific positive values. The only common element of man and the ultimate value in Sartre's view is freedom. Man does not reason what is good from established values but rather embraces his freedom, acts, and then applies his reason to determine the value of his act. It is in this way that Man is "the sum of his acts" and the sole "legislator of human values."[11]

Originally, the concept of concerted action was both impossible and deplorable to Sartre. Since Man is free, one could hardly determine the direction or outcome of such a union; since each uses the Other such action is detrimental (if possible);

and, since man is ultimately alone in the choices he makes and the actions which follow, it is only deplorable self-deception which could foster such a notion. "I cannot count upon men whom I do not know, I cannot base my confidence upon human goodness or upon man's interest in the good of society, seeing that man is free and that there is no human nature which I can take as foundational."[11a]

In recent years, however, Sartre has come to believe that man is more limited in freedom than he himself had originally anticipated. While each man is free within his own situation, some circumstances, such as poverty or war, make the situation so oppressive that genuine liberation is impossible without constant revolution to maintain freedom. This revolution must proceed from unified effort within which individual talent is utilized and the individual freely relinquishes a degree of his freedom in his concerted effort with other men. In this way, "My freedom recognizes itself in my own action and simultaneously in the action of the Other. No one is imposed upon."[12] There is no break with previous thought in Sartre's present notion of unified striving for mankind's liberation. Freedom continues to be the "supreme value" and the individual is still stressed, not as becoming indistinguishable within the group, but as offering his individual approach and thereby growing as an individual as he enhances the situation of the group. He is his own action in the group praxis.[13]

Clearly, certain key similarities in the

ideas of Brecht and Sartre are outstanding: each sees man as basically sundered from an unconcerned and godless universe; to varying degrees, both men direct the attention of their audience outward toward other men and to the notion that man's destiny is man; for Brecht and Sartre choice is highly important and freedom is emphasized, although again to varying degrees; each man holds all men responsible for the world, although this is conceived in a different sense; each foresees the possibility of no more than a relative morality for modern man yet affirms the necessity of actions to perfect the individual and mankind as a whole; and each man insists that it is the writer's duty, indeed the duty of every aware individual, to reveal the "truth" of man's ability to change the world to all of mankind. It is not difficult to understand why each man produced a man-centered, didactic drama for the society of this century.

Still, it is the dissimilarities which become most interesting for it is they which bear on the distinct examples of the "true realism" which each man provided to reveal his brand of the truth. Brecht affirms a human nature which Sartre rejects; Brecht recognizes good and evil and the necessity of universal moral values which Sartre again rejects. While both men proclaim man's freedom, it is Sartre who emphasizes the individual man and his basic aloneness; Brecht prefers to discuss freedom as one aspect of man and man in a social context. Brecht

discusses man's responsibility through acts of commission or omission, while Sartre asserts that man must absorb with his freedom a total responsibility for the world. Each man conceives of the utilization of reason in a different sense, and while Brecht reveres the scientific method, Sartre finds this means fraught with the fallibility of man and thus de-emphasizes its importance.

Let us proceed to an examination of the dramatic form and style which each man elected and determine the relationship of these theses to the distinct examples of twentieth century drama which these two men have provided.

Dramatic Theory and Practice.

As is suggested by the ending of his book Nausea, Sartre considers writing a means through which the author might come to feel his life has meaning. Also, "One of the chief reasons for artistic creation is certainly the need of feeling that we are essential in relationship to the world." Yet Sartre insists that the artist must never create for himself alone.

> It is the conjoint effort of author and reader or audience which brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind . . . And since this directed creation is an absolute beginning, it is therefore brought about by the freedom of the reader, and by what is purest in that freedom. Thus, freedom to collaborate in the production of his work . . .14

There is yet another reason for which the writer turns to his art. Sartre sees that the majority of people deny their freedom and its accompanying responsibility; such people view themselves as things determined by other things and by a pre-set system of values. The playwright stands in the position

to emancipate such persons from their self-deception. Repeatedly Sartre uses the image of the playwright as the one who holds a mirror before each audience member.[15] Likewise, he utilizes the image of the theatre itself as presenting modern man with a portrait of himself.[16] Elsewhere, he states:

> we may conclude that the writer has chosen to reveal the world and particularly to reveal man to other men so that the latter may assume full responsibility before the object which has been thus laid bare . . . the writer presents it /society/ with its image; he calls upon it to assume it or to change itself . . . the writer gives society a guilty conscience . . .[17]

As he presents this image, as he performs the task of becoming society's guilty conscience, he is a "free man addressing free men" and "has only a single subject--freedom."[18] The good writer, then, appeals directly to the freedom of his audience and not to the passivity, not to the emotions. Thus, Sartre rejects the traditional concept of realism which appeals to emotions and their catharsis and requires identification of the audience member with the characters. He rejects the concept because it appeals to the passivity of the audience and because "the problems we wish to deal with in the theatre are very different from those we habitually dealt with before 1940."[19] For these reasons Sartre seeks a form of drama which bespeaks the times in which we live, a drama which he states must be somewhere between the two extremes--dramatic realism and Brecht's Epic drama.[20]

Bertolt Brecht saw the world in which he lived as anything but pleasant, "Truly, I live in a dark period. The innocuous world is stupid."[21] Yet, he never lost faith in his belief that a time could come when Man would accept his human responsibility to his fellowman, "But you, when things have gone so far that man helps man make allowances when you think of us."[22] Brecht saw himself as a member of this humanity and as a playwright his responsibility was clear. In a poem written in 1935 entitled "The Playwright's Song," Brecht describes the responsibility to humanity which he

as a playwright must bear and the methods by which his art strives to accomplish this responsibility:

> I am a playwright. I show
> What I have seen. In mankind's markets
> I have seen how humanity is traded. That
> I show, I, the playwright.
>
> How they step into each other's rooms with schemes
> Or rubber truncheons, or with cash
> How they stand in the streets and wait
> How they lay traps for one another
> Full of hope
> How they make appointments
> How they fasten on each other
> How they make love
> How they safeguard the loot
> How they eat.
> I show it all. . . .[23]

As a playwright, he would show man's inhumanity to man, expose it to recognition, and encourage change.

The word "show" is an important one here; Brecht wanted to "show" on the stage in the sense that the teacher shows or points out what he has written on the board or the lawyer produces exhibits in the courtroom. The audience must learn, make judgments based on reason, and act.

To Brecht this entire theory was impossible within the confines of modern drama as it stood. How could the audience member react as a judge with a reasoned response if he was in a narcotized state from emotional appeals and identification? How could the audience member be expected to leave the theatre and act upon his decisions if a catharsis freed him from any bonds to the drama he has just witnessed? Plainly, he could not. Brecht determined to provide a type of drama which would limit or eliminate these problems. "The point is not to leave the spectator purged by a cathartic but to leave him a changed man, or rather, to sow within him the seed of changes which must be completed outside the theater."[24] "People have acquired new motives for their actions; science has found new dimensions by which to measure them; it's time for art to find new expressions."[25]

Thus, Bertolt Brecht formulated his "un-Aristotelian" drama which did not move in a linear fashion to a climax; it did not, through its realism, produce empathy or catharsis of pity and fear. Instead, his drama became a narrative, a series of self-contained units which demonstrated some element of social reality. Empathy and illusion, those elements by which he considered rational man lost his critical ability, needed to be eliminated. The spectator at a production by Brecht's Berliner Ensemble viewed a stage which required and provided no photographic realism but rather the realism to be derived from scientific demonstration "viewed for evidence of change whereby to plot the shape of the world to come."[26]

This type of theatre does not find itself dependent upon one primary component. It is involved with an audience of autonomous witnesses to an action with which they must not identify, and it requires a number of experimental techniques which form the basis for the demonstration which appeals to reason rather than emotions. These experimental techniques provide that the world to be seen upon the stage merely hint at the objects being represented. Not only is illusion unnecessary, but it is destroyed by the short scene fragments which replace linear plot development; by interruption of the action through some device; and by a deliberate severing and consistent hindering of any achievement of suspense. The drama is characterized by a sophistication and stylization and a genuine enjoyment of these technicalities which readily distinguishes it from any correct imitation of real life.

These stylized techniques by which Brecht proposed to achieve the detachment he desired were placed under the heading of Verfremdungseffekt. Briefly, "The V-effect consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking, and unexpected."[27]

The result of these efforts was Epic Theatre, a style and form of drama conceived and developed to provide a platform for the observation of the problems of modern man and the choices open to him. And this conception of modern drama proceeded directly from Brecht's concern with reason and the scientific method, as well as his desire to act as playwright in the capacity of teacher, to teach those audience members the elements of the human predicament and urge them to question, choose, and act.

Contrary to Brecht, Sartre is not primarily concerned with appeals to reason and does not share the devotion of Brecht for the scientific method and teaching. It is not too surprising that Sartre's major preoccupation in his theses, man's freedom, should be his preoccupation as well in his formulation of a theory of the drama. As was mentioned previously, Sartre considers it the playwright's duty to present society with a mirror-image of itself in order that it may see the need for and the possibility of change. As he presents this image, Sartre states that he is a "free man addressing free men" and has "only a single subject--freedom."[28] From this premise, Sartre determines that the authentic writer necessarily appeals directly to the freedom of the audience to consider and complete the playwright's image of the world; the writer does not, therefore, appeal to the audience's passivity, that is to say, to its emotions. Thus, Sartre rejects the traditional concept of realism which appeals to emotions and their catharsis and requires that the audience member identify and empathize with the characters. (As will shortly be demonstrated, even had Sartre not held to this belief proceeding from his notion of freedom, his concept of man's creation of himself by means of actions would preclude characters with whom audiences could identify.)

Unlike Brecht, Sartre does not embrace the terms "teaching" or "didactic" for his drama. In fact, he has insisted that his drama is not meant to teach any particular philosophy. Obviously, both men are didactic playwrights, committed vociferously to their ideas; perhaps one would concur that Sartre's didacticism does not have the aura of specific directives about it which permeates Brecht's work. Nonetheless, Sartre does advocate consistently self-awareness and a reverence toward freedom. Like Brecht, however, in his approach to drama, he recognizes that the majority of his audience is conditioned to realism, and, furthermore, relishes this type of drama for it permits them to empathize and later relieve their tensions, ultimately to maintain their viewpoint that man cannot change. Sartre proposed to take advantage of the former reaction and utilize the "approved" techniques of realism while theregy "surreptitiously" waging an attack on the latter position.

A closer examination of this approach juxtaposed with the thematic material demonstrates the manner in which Sartre gives to realism a new dimension. Sartre initially provides his audience with the familiar ground of realistic theatre--the drawing room of No Exit or the wartime prison interior or the two levels of a wealthy ship-builder's home. Although Zeus is present almost from the onset, The Flies initially seems to be simply a reworking of the Greek tragedy in traditional costume. No Exit's initial movement is the telling of stories which would be standard fare in a French grade-B movie. The audience finds itself on apparently familiar ground. Then: the Greek tragedy is gradually revealed as a very modern debate between man and God, an opus dedicated to man's freedom. The drawing-room turns out to be hell and the stories, in large part, turn out to be untrue. Consistently the drama reveals that the traditional examination of any possible psychological

motivations will not answer the burning questions which the characters ask.

Progressively, Sartre has introduced his audience to the drama of existentialist thought. As Eric Bentley states,

> The craftmanship might more properly be termed Ibsenite, since it chiefly consists of keeping the audience from knowing the facts too early, that is to describe it more positively, of letting discoveries explode like carefully adjusted time bombs all through the action.29

But this progressive development itself has a two-fold purpose: not only does it gradually lure the audience onto unfamiliar ground via the familiar and create exciting theatre in the process, but it also reveals the progress of the character such as Orestes, Hugo, and Goetz to the necessary self-awareness essential to authentic existence. The characters and the audience discover the level of meaning together in an examination of the relationships of human consciousnesses to each other and the choices and acts of men as related to their authors. The language of the plays is vigorous and colorful and <u>familiar</u>, yet, juxtaposed with the statements of the less familiar existentialist vision of the world, it, too, provides a distinctive effect, at one in the same time a part of and yet divorced from traditional realism. The vigorous language drives home key issues and the familiar words provide clarity and enhance tension on one level, yet accompanying the exceptional situations and philosophical discussions of the characters, the words are set apart from everyday talk.

Each playwright is attempting to convey his own "realistic" image of the world in which we live, thus each adopts the term, "true realism" Although Sartre carefully adapts the techniques of traditional realism to his own ends, it becomes clear that innovations in form are of

secondary importance to the revelation of the content, "freedom." Brecht, on the other hand, strongly emphasizing the necessity of a scientific theatre for modern man, evolves a style in which form and content are of equal importance and inseparable.

Character. Eric Bentley has stated concerning Brecht's characters,

> . . . the theorist Brecht professes that the individual is unreal except as the sum of social relations. All the same the best characters in his plays are individuals in a perfectly conventional sense. They have the same quality as the characters in "bourgeois" and pre-bourgeois literature.30

Those who have read Brehct's theoretical writings concerning drama and have also read Sartre's, "Forgers of Myths" recognize that there is often little similarity between what they say their drama does and what their drama itself actually reveals. In this instance, Brecht's practice supersedes his theory on two levels: he is simply a better playwright than a writer of theory, and, although he does devote his attention to man in his social context, he also recognizes the need to show individual representatives of humanity revealing aspects of their human nature and participation in reasoned choices. On the former level, each of the previously mentioned V-effects afford a wealth of commentary on the protagonists and antagonists. On the latter level, the characters necessarily have much in common with bourgeois drama--reasoned deliberation prior to choice and certain natural inherent qualities which may be taken as universal. Thus, with certain of his characters such as Mother Courage, Kattrin, Shen Te, and Grusha, all the V-effects which Brecht employed could not dispel some moments in which the audience's emotional involvement was very real and very strong.

Employing philosophical terminology to the type of characters Brecht created, we may say that they are primarily essentialist, that is, based on the assumption that man possesses inherent qualities and morality which are revealed in his acts. Brecht's characters are clearly made known through the conventional methods--they discuss themselves and others discuss them; they choose and act in the audience's view. In addition, such devices as Mother Courage's wagon comment on character, in this case the sutler's interests and the progress of the war. It is important that Mother Courage and Pelagea Vlassova step forward and sing songs which introduce them; it is important as a V-effect but also to establish them as individuals. It is essential to witness Vlassova as the aspects of her human nature unfold--as a typical mother, she initially works for the Party because she wants to save and to help her son; it is a natural step which any mother could take. However, it becomes clear that she continues as a Party member when she values her natural inclination toward kindness and justice for others above her self-interest and when she applies reason to her situation. Mother Courage, on the other hand, is revealed to have very human qualities relating to her motherly love, but she lets her "business endeavors" infringe upon all else. She is basically irrational--she would follow war but assumes that she will not be hurt by it. Each is intended to indicate to the audience the conflicts between natural inclinations and the evils of the world; the importance of self-sacrifice, and the value to be ascribed to reason.

To teach this lesson, Brecht does not elect to bring forth great heroes, providing instead very ordinary human beings. Even Galileo, above average in his intellectual ability and devotion to science, is brought down to the level of the ordinary man through the revelation of his very

human enjoyment of the physical pleasures of life. "When he defends the normal, the ordinary, and the common, he is not therefore championing vulgarity and mediocrity; he is championing human nature."[31]

Sartre is not concerned with championing human nature; quite the contrary. Rejecting totally the concept of human nature, he suggests that man is continually making himself, each man is a void initially and proceeds through his choices and acts to fashion his essence. In addition, each man is requiredto give meaning and values to his acts. Thus, in contrast to the characters of Brecht, Sartre's characters are existentialist, that is, based on the assumption that man has no ready-made human nature and the values to be attributed to man's acts cannot be determined prior to the actions themselves.

This being the case, characters appear to have no character at all until it is progressively developed through the acts performed within the play, or the appearance of character is stripped away by the revelation of bad faith.

> . . . man is not to be defined as a 'reasoning animal,' or a 'social' one, but as a free being, entirely indeterminate, who must choose his own being when confronted with certain necessities. . . .[32]

The openness of character does not mean that no individuals emerge nor does it mean that the characters are not interesting. It does mean that characters are distinct from each other insofar as their individual projects and the particular actions within that overall project differ or clash with one another. It also means that the emphasis shifts from an investigation of the psychological underpinning which fosters a character's particular deliberations and decisions to the heart of a situation in which it is

revealed that each man's choices and the acts proceeding from them are elements which continually make him what he is at each moment. The characters, then, are not witnessed performing certain actions because they possess certain natures, but as being what they are because of the acts which they perform. This means also that the discussion of character becomes so inextricably tied to a discussion of situation and action that we must proceed immediately to this area in order to complete the discussion of character.

Action. Three key theses converge in Brecht's approach to dramatic action--the necessity of rational approaches to choice and action the importance of man in the social context and the universality of values. All of these are appropriately commented upon through Brecht's "scientific" presentation in both text and production.

Revertin again to the term essentialist to describe Brecht's characters, this writer can also cast light upon Brecht's approach to dramatic action. From this point of view, characters form their values, apply reason to a given situation on the basis of these values and then act. Only in the sense that each man thus forms his values and reveals himself in what he does can he be said to be continually becoming. Brecht applies this rational acceptance of values, choices, and subsequent actions to social relationships. It is in this manner that action can be see to progress--reason is see to motivate action; self-interest as a value in itself and failure to reason result in the wrong course of action.

Brecht reveals this action in the manner of a series of school lessons or a series of scientific observations leading to his "hypothesis." At this point, it may be helpful to demonstrate the correlation between Brecht's "scientific"

style and the action of the plays through a brief consideration of a V-effect in both text and production--projected titles designed to precede each scene and the required acting technique.

Brecht's usage of the projected titles vividly indicates the important of the V-effect as a comment on the action as well as its capacity of hindering emotional involvement. The titles foreshadow coming events thus removing suspense. They also direct the audience's attention toward the specific action itself; at the same time they suggest an attitude toward the action. For example, Scene Five of Mother Courage offers the inscription, "Tilly's Victory at Magdeburg Costs Mother Courage four officer's shirts." On the one hand, it lowers the history-book epoch to the level of the individuals who are actually affected, but, on the other hand, the scene shows a Mother Courage who must be forced to provide shirts for bandages, a vivid commentary on her character and on the damaging effects of the war on body and on conscious virtue. One cannot miss the ironic point of the heading for Scene Eight, "The peace threatens Mother Courage with ruin." The development of this action in the scene which follows again demonstrates the reciprocal nature of form to action to content within Brecht's work.

These individual scene headings are perfectly compatible with, in fact, complementary to, the structural pattern of Brecht's plays and the action which proceeds within them. Brecht was not interested in the conventional progression of plot to climax. Instead, he created a series of autonomous individual scenes, each of which is provided with a heading announcing the coming action. The action in most of Brecht's scenes moves ahead, in large measure, independent of the

action which preceded it, although the basic gestus (attitude toward humanity to be revealed by the action) of the plays prevails throughout. (The evils of war and the individual's participation in this evil can be seen throughout Mother Courage, yet each scene is permitted to speak individually to this point. The first scene introduces the family and Elif goes to the army; the next scene begins with Mother Courage haggling with a cook and Elif is witnessed as a soldier. However, previous knowledge of the situation which brought him to the army is not a prerequisite for an appreciation of the scene. The following scene involves the other son's trouble, and the ensuing scene does little but enclose the "Song of the Great Capitulation," and so forth.) In this way, the traditional suspense is shattered in order to maintain a critical awareness within the audience toward the actions and the choices leading to the actions.

The actors were also required to demonstrate in their portrayal of characters a gestus or attitude toward the humanity of which they were a part and as attested to by the other characters around them. In a noteworthy scene from Mother Courage, the action of Helene Weigel as Courage emphasizes this relationship between the action, V-effect acting, and the awareness required of the audience. When Weigel as Courage has just bandaged and put to bed her daughter who has been permanently scarred as a result of the war, she says, "Let the war be damned!" In the production directed by Brecht, she says these words while running her hands fondly over the goods which her daughter has just brought. Thus, the actress reveals her character as a mother experiencing a natural inclination to damn the war which has maimed her daughter; but there is also Courage the tradeswoman who clings steadfastly to her business.

Thus, the actions of the plays are organized in a series of scenes devoted to the basic attitude toward humanity which is being presented in the overall play. Each V-effect, including the acting, is designed to enhance and comment on the action as well as to lessen empathic response. The goal is a critical audience who has witnessed key actions and the choices which were possible within the context of these actions. Further, the goal is a critical audience which will apply reason to their own choices and actions in the real world.

Since Sartre's characters simply <u>are not</u> prior to actions which they choose to perform within a given situation, he terms his emphasis a shift from drama of character to drama of situation. Considering Sartre's philosophical viewpoint which directs his notion of character development, it is indeed impossible to discuss character without discussing actions and situation as well; Sartre states of this existentialist drama:

> A man who is free within the circle of his own situation, who chooses, whether he wishes to or not, for everyone else when he chooses for himself--that is the subject matter of our plays. As a successor to the theatre of characters we want to have a theatre of situation . . .33

This statement should be taken at face value--it does provide a clear picture of the direction of the drama and indicates those themes which are the directing forces--freedom-responsibility and situation.

For such drama, in which characters are empty vessels until they have chosen and acted within a situation, it becomes unnecessary to present only those actions which would seem most life-like and inevitable and equally

unnecessary to unfold deep psychological motivations formerly presented as the genuine bases for characters' actions. What is important is that the audience be faced with meaningful situations in which the characters accept or reject their freedom and responsibility. Jacques Guicharnaud effectively summarizes this idea:

> His plays are investigations of the different relations of man to his acts, whether he tries to rid himself of them . . . or completely assumes them. Without denying all the excuses science gives for his behavior, man is considered in the perspective of the formula: In any case, whatever I do, I am the one who does it.34

Within this investigation, although freedom is the most important theme, it is Sartre's notion of the accompanying, all-encompassing responsibility which acts not only as a key theme but as the primary directing force on the action as well; it directs the course of the action and ultimately "picks" the characters and situations. This is true, for each act that the characters perform brings with it the anxiety of responsibility and brings their whole being into question.

The more horrible and exceptional the act, the more the individual who has acted alone begins to question; at the same time, the action of the plays themselves becomes more intense. For this reason, Sartre's plays tend toward austerity, great intensity, and exceptional situations. In The Flies, for example, by telling the story of Orestes, who killed his own mother and then proclaimed that is was his duty to do so, Sartre was able to demonstrate that man is free and that he can accept the responsibility for his acts no matter how horrible. Similarly, the situation in No Exit and the actions which the characters recount are hardly the general rule in the life of each audience member

nor is the dilemma of Hugo--personal feelings in conflict with the Party's orders to assassinate his superior--more representative of an everyday situation. Yet, as Guicharnaud so aptly states, "the characters' exceptional situations are meant to express, in the form of hyperbolic metaphor, the similar agony of any man faced with himself."[35]

In the Sartrean drama, as in his vision of life itself, the man who acts and would accept his responsibility questions and discovers that he is completely alone, completely responsible and that there are no excuses and no external justifications. It is in pursuit of such justification to alleviate the anxiety accompanying this responsibility that the characters of the plays begin to reflect upon their former acts. If they are to accept their responsibility they come to recognize that they cannot justify their acts, but that reflection is necessary in order to assume another aspect of their responsibility as men, the formulation of values. Unlike the essentialist character who reasons and developes his values prior to action, the existentialist character acts, from an awareness of his situation, then he reasons and determines values.

Entire sections of plays, in fact, virtually the entirety of one play is based upon such a reflective search for motive which culminates in the realization that meaning and value must be given to a past act in the present moment. In his play, Dirty Hands, Sartre involves his audience in what appears to be, if no a traditional "who-dunnit" at least a variation, the "why-dunnit," the search for a true motive. When the majority of the play has been devoted to a flashback in which Hugo attempts to answer the question of his motive in assassinating Hoederer, Sartre startles the audience with the highly un-traditional assertion--there is no answer in past motives. After following a

course in pursuit of motive for an entire play, in the last moments of the action, the character gives the meaning and value he chooses to his act and claims the responsibility for his deed as his own.

Also, in accepting freedom and responsibility for his acts and giving meaning and values to them, each character renders each of his actions within the play a creation, a creation which, in turn, creates his character. Thus, we see the relationship of man to his acts as a means of mutual creation, if the character is existing authentically, or a situation of stagnation if the man is in bad faith. Thus, characters such as Orestes and Goetz are seen to evolve before the audience's eyes, while characters such as Garcin and Estelle can never leave the vicious circle fostered of their own bad faith, their refusal to give meaning to their lives through an acceptance of their responsibility and through action.

Moreover, those characters who are able to accept their responsibility are exceptionally heroic. The anxiety accompaying responsibility is so great and the character is so alone that the man who accepts his freedom-responsibility is compared to an Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders, a burden which Orestes comes to accept gladly, while Franz Gerlach recognizes the burden and continually refuses to accept it.

Sartre's belief that "man is the sum of his acts" quite clearly immutably molds character and action within his plays. Since the characters are nothing until they create themselves, and since Sartre's comment on the magnitude of responsibility is rendered by means of exceptional situations and characters, it is highly improbable that anyone would identify with the characters. This is a by-product which is desirable to Sartre, for it benefits his appeal to free completion of the action as

opposed to emotional involvement. Also, it is the situation itself which is Sartre's chief area of interest; he insists that he is not interested in representing universal characters but universal situations. That these are bigger than life emphasizes the problems and the possibilities of authentic existence.

> He says, 'No more characters; the heroes are freedoms caught in a trap like all of us.' We can readily give a simple sense to this programme. Sartre is not going to portray for us solid figures with vices and virtues painted upon them. He is going to show us people made transparent by an ambiguous radiance. To do this is not to show the world as futile or senseless, since a part of the picture is the urgent demand for sense. In other words, Sartre intends to exhibit his people as more or less reflective moral agents in a peculiarly distracted and uncertain context, and to concentrate upon the quality of their doubt or insincerity.36

Summary and Conclusion.

Brecht and Sartre have constructed a didactic drama which is directed in its own way toward the modern audience. Since each has attempted to portray a realistic image of his own conception of life in the twentieth century, he has termed his drama "the true realism." Within the context of his own defintion, each is. The drama is dependent upon those key notions of each playwright's philosophy, however, for its substance and form. And their examples of "the true realism" differ in the sense that their philosophies differ--in their views of reason and the scientific method, responsibility, human nature, and morality.

Each man does offer his audience a drama of choice. For Sartre, choice is unavoidable--even a decision not to choose, is, afterall, a choice--but man cannot truly exist until he deliberatly chooses and acts. Brecht does

not maintain such an extensive view of human responsibility, but he does see man as the author of his own woe and the only source of choice and action to change this course.

Each playwright dedicates himself to the revelation of this truth of man's freedom and responsibility as the sole destiny of mankind. Brecht embraces the term didactic for his drama and engages in open appeals to reason. Sartre does not propose to teach a specific course but to mirror the problems and advocate authentic existence in general.

Their separate views on the aforementioned issues of the mode of man's existing directly influence their attitudes toward character and action, in fact, toward their total view of drama. Both Sartre and Brecht reveal drama that in the truest sense is an inseparable and reciprocal molding of content and form. Obviously, however, Sartre's concern with the drama of situation and with the discussion of ideas concerning freedom-responsibility have made him less interested than Brecht in the dramatic innovation in form and style. Brecht, on the other hand, as director and playwright and due to his affinity for the scientific method and rational appeals, has expressed and initiated equal concern for form and content.

Whatever have been the primary concerns of these playwrights, it is clear that the relationship between their ideas and their expression of them is so definite and indissoluble that a thorough understanding of their theses is a necessary prerequisite to a genuine appreciation of their creative impulse and the resulting drama. The committed playwright's ideas so permeate his creativity, in fact his whole purpose for creation, that the ideas and the creation become one.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Quoted in Humanism: What Is It? (San Francisco: Humanist Soceity of San Francisco, 1947), p. 3.

[2]Erich Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), p. 182.

[3]Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Flies," A Treasury of the Theatre, ed. John Gassner (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), p. 493.

[4]Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions (New York: Wisdom Library, 1957), p. 16.

[5]Existentialism, p. 34.

[6]Existentialism, p. 37.

[7]Sartre: His Philosophy and Psychoanalysis. (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1953), p. 53.

[8]Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel Barnes. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. 553-6.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Edward M. Berckman, "The Function of Hope in Brecht's Pre-Revolutionary Theater," Brecht Heute/Brecht Today (Frankfurt am Main: Athenaum, 1971), p. 11.

[11]Existentialism, p. 34.

[11a]Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, ed. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956), p. 299.

[12]Wilfred Desan, The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre (Garden City, N. J.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965), p. 145.

[13]Jean-Paul Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 406-7; Rene Lafarge, Jean-Paul Sartre: His Philosophy (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), p. 161.

[14]Jean-Paul Sartre, Literature and Existentialism, trans. Bernard Frechtman. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), pp. 39; 63-4.

[15]See, Jean-Paul Sartre, "Beyond Bourgeois Theatre," Theatre in the Twentieth Century, ed. Robert W. Corrigan. (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1963), pp. 131-140; St. Genet, Actor and Martyr, trans. Bernard Frechtman. (New York: Brazillier, 1965), p. 599.

[16]Jean-Paul Sartre, "Forgers of Myths," European Theories of the Drama, ed., Barrett H. Clark. (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1947), p. 402.

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

[17]Literature, pp. 24; 81.

[18]Literature, p. 64.

[19]"Forgers of Myths," p. 400.

[20]"Beyond Bourgeois Theatre," p. 140

[21]Bertolt Brecht, untitled poem, in John Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht. (London: Methuen, 1959), pp. 228-230.

[22]loc. cit.

[23]Willett, pp. 85-86.

[24]Peter Demetz, Brecht; A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 27.

[25]Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre; The Development of an Aesthetic, trans. John Willett. (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 67.

[26]David Grossvogel, Four Playwrights and a Postscript (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 13.

[27]Walter Weidli, The Art of Bertolt Brecht, trans. David Russell (New York: University Press, 1963), p. 27.

[28]Jean-Paul Sartre, What Is Literature? trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 64.

[29]Eric Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1964), p. 197.

[30]Bentley, p. 227.

[31]loc. cit.

[32]"Forgers of Myths," p. 400.

[34]Modern French Theatre; From Giraudoux to Beckett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 138.

[33]"Forgers of Myths," p. 401.

[35]Guicharnaud, p. 136

[36]Iris Murdoch, Sartre; Romantic Rationalist (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 36-7.